



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

JOHN F. PEYTON, JR., DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 587-1350
Fax: (808) 587-1282

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UNIQUE PRISON PROGRAM FOR INMATE-FATHERS EARNS NOMINATION FOR PRESTIGIOUS STATE AWARD

HONOLULU— Ted Sakai, the acting Warden of the minimum-security Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF) on Oahu is a finalist for an award that you wouldn't normally connect with a prison or warden. The nomination is for the 2004 Hawaii Outstanding Advocate for Children and Youth award, sponsored by the Hawaii State Legislature's Keiki Caucus and Hawaiian Electric Company.

The recognition is not hard to understand once you learn about the Supporting Keiki of Incarcerated Parents (SKIP) program at the prison. The innovative pilot program began in April of 2003 with funding provided by a grant to Parents and Children Together (PACT). The Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA), The Institute for Family Enrichment (TIFFE) and Child and Family Services (CFS) are active partners in this effort.

"Our statistics show that more than half of Hawaii's male inmates are fathers and that children of prisoners are six times more likely to be incarcerated at some point in their lives and we hope this program can help break that cycle," said Sakai. "Some studies have also shown that therapeutic involvement with families during an inmate's incarceration decreases repeat incarceration."

The goals of the program are all aimed at breaking the incarceration cycle. The goals include helping inmates develop positive relationships between them and their children, allowing inmate-fathers to bond with and learn about their children and guiding the inmates in developing skills to succeed in their role as their children's first teacher.

"We also help guide the inmate-fathers in the self reflection and healing necessary to successfully nurture children," added Sakai.

The SKIP program is a multi-phase process. It begins with a program called Supporting Parents as First Teachers. This class is a five-week parent education workshop designed to facilitate increased understanding of a parent's role in supporting a child's learning, growth and

development. The next two phases consist of a 13-week, nationally certified program designed to facilitate the development of attitudes and skills necessary for a nurturing father and a coinciding 13-week Play-to-Learn group where the inmate-fathers apply their developing knowledge and skills while reconnecting with their children under the guidance of trained facilitators. While the children are in playgroups with the fathers, a family strengthening support group for mothers and caregivers of the children in the playgroup is conducted in a nearby room.

"This won't work if we don't supply the families with the needed support, information and resources to succeed," said Sakai. "We are fortunate to have partners that have the professional expertise and a strong commitment to the children."

"Any program that can bring a ray of hope and a goal to get out of prison and not return is a program worth nurturing," said Department of Public Safety Director, John F. Peyton, Jr.

So far, three 13-week sessions have been completed and 14 inmate-fathers, 22 children and 16 mothers and caregivers have graduated with a new hope for the future.

The awards presentation is Wednesday, November 10, 2004 at 11:30 am at Washington Place. Governor Linda Lingle and Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. will attend the ceremony to help recognize all the nominees.

Outstanding Advocates for Children and Youth awards are presented annually to recognize significant contributions of individuals and organizations in improving the lives of children. It is part of the celebration of Children and Youth Month in Hawaii.

The mission of the Hawaii Department of Public Safety is to provide for the safety of the public and state facilities through law enforcement and correctional management.

For more information contact:

Michael R. Gaede
Communications News Director
Department of Public Safety
Office: 587-1254
Cell: 428-1209

Ted Sakai
Acting Warden, Waiawa Correctional Facility
677-6129

Hawaii Coalition for Dads
Greg Farstrup
841-2245

Good Beginnings Alliance
Wayna Buch
531-5502

The Institute for Family Enrichment
Maryjane Amundson
506-8433